FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

"For a world united in prayer"

Volume XXII, Number 4, August 1971

FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

Founded by Carl Allison Evans (1880-1956)

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Our purpose: To promote the practice of prayer among all religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God, regardless of race, creed, or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind.

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EDITORIAL

ON BEING HUMAN WHEN YOU'RE NOT A SAINT

Of all my relationships the one I have with God—you may call him what you will—is the fundamental one, the one that has lasted without frazzling, the one to which I have struggled home again and again. For people like myself, without theological training and little talent to think abstractly to begin with, that relationship is very difficult to apprehend mentally, although I am able to know its presence by feelings deeper than the mind; by the same psychosomatic mechanism I know when it is absent. I am aware that, without it, I am unable to find my stillness. Sometimes I think that my stillness and the relationship with God are exactly the same thing.

Gradually—with the passage of time and the arrival and departure of all the inevitable unhappinesses and joys of life—you learn about such matters on your own. It seems to be mainly an unconscious process. For suddenly, like the stone-deaf man equipped with a hearingaid, you can understand the words that you have been seeing all your life—all the words of Jesus or Buddha and the saints and Shakespeare or Dostoevsky and professors and your own mother, say, or an aunt whom the family always considered a little bit off on religion. It does not seem to be that one day you miraculously see through the words to their meanings. It seems to be that you perceive the meanings and then in amazement fit to them all the old familiar sayings. That is the way it often happens—everything taking place in such a hit-and-miss and higgledypiggledy fashion and so informally, so to speak, that you can count yourself lucky that anything ever informs you of anything that is important in the course of your all-too-human existence.

It can happen to you at any age, apparently, when you're almost twice as old as me or just about half as old. Suddenly you stumble on your stillness. You learn where it's located. You mark the ways that lead to it. You begin to find out how to keep it up. For helpful hints and confirmations that you are right you may con-

sult Plato or Saint Paul or your pastor or the local swami, but you are happily conscious of the fact that for the first time you are living your own life, learning the rules of it, learning that it is a daily effort that will go on until the last day of your life. You have an extraordinary sense of all being well. You like this sensation—and it is a sensation, which must be similar to that felt by grass or the flowers. You like it so much, value it so much, that you get "hooked" on it as addicts do on drugs or drunks on alcohol. You become unable to imagine life without it. It is now so essential to you that it is the center of each of your hours. It is your center.

One of the mysterious aspects of spiritual awakening is the resulting falling-away of many of your shortcomings. Your worst faults, your most cherished neuroses, even some of your colorful personality traits that seem to be more "you" than anything else are shed one by one like brown leaves—and for the same reason that the leaves are: they have grown unnecessary. For the first time in your life you feel wholly safe. You have no impulse to be pushy, to get ahead, to grow rich or famous, to boast and show off and to regard yourself as superior to the world. You have a sense of strength that does not require flexing in public. You have a feeling of happiness that is content to be private, even secret. You enjoy the contentment of something minor, a snowflake, an apple, a bud with a flower packed inside.

It is during the first of these realizations of spiritual bliss that you may be likely to wonder if, after all, you may not be a saint. This vain and narcissistic thought does not last long, because a spiritual awakening also frees your intelligence, your sense of reality, and your humor.

When you occupy your stillness, when it fills you, you are as separate and autonomous as a star.

Since we are not saints, however, most of us are neither capable nor desirous of living at such a level all day long. In the remainder of the day we are probably going to crave company, a wife, a husband, a family, someone to talk to, a friend, a group, a club, a crowd. And it is here that we expose our hard-won stillnesses to the worst danger and our fragile humanity to the most

pain. And it is no wonder. The living of your own life spiritually costs trouble enough. To try to combine it with someone else's living of another life is, seriously considered, a job that ought to be tackled only by the brainiest, the bravest, the most daring.

Ideally, according to the poet Rilke, the coming-together of two persons should be the joining of "two solitudes." Weigh the words "two" and "solitudes." They are almost incompatible with each other, all but cancel one another out.

The acrobatics required have been neatly described.

Yet from your own life you have learned how common need and simple hope and natural desire override your wisest reticences. You know the disasters you can create or simply allow to be created as a result of your human longings, your disregard for your stillness, your disrespect for someone else's.

Nevertheless, we persist in being our human selves. Maybe we will never learn. Trying to join my life to yours, I find out, first, that you are not perfect. If I am not very civilized, this makes me mad at you. If I am wise, though, I then perceive my own imperfection. It can be an exceedingly comic—or tragic—business which can ruin both our stillnesses forever.

On the other hand, when two people have succeeded in joining their lives, it is as pleasant to see as two flowers blooming side by side. Obviously it's worth the risk of the dangers it can bring. And even more obviously it reveals the spiritual fortitude of each of the parties to it.

I would guess that our earthly human loves are the most delicate and difficult and therefore the most accurate tests of our relationship with God. —P. G.

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them. —Matthew 7: 12

JUNE *Carla Patsuris*

What is June but another time
For songs of the good green world
Measuring the music of the sun
Through a dazzle of days;
A time to listen with an ear
For elves, pinkletinks and toads
And "the Voice of the turtle";
A time for contemplation
Over creativities undefinable
Of innumerable magical gifts
From a Supreme Munificent Magician?

ONCE AGAIN OCTOBER *Carla Patsuris*

September, now, brings only memories
Of long-ago patterns..."thirty days hath"...
September: Virgo's interval of life
With changing, changing-yet unchanging path
That joins October's jeweled house of hope
Where constancies forever-new beguile
And touch through love-at-work romantic hearts
With happiness that lingers for awhile.
Who knew, and mourns, a vanished pilgrimage
Who thirsts where muted fountain rusticates
Who hungers for tendered sweets apportioned
To leave no over-taste that satiates
Must bless for one more time the thirty-one
October days of bounty on the run.

RESURRECTION OF THE SPIRIT

AS A PANACEA

Francis Merchant

Part One

For untold centuries men have wonderingly contemplated the stars, those stations of pulsating light that pour their radiance through interstellar space in splendor and beauty. The poet has regarded these spatial torches as symbols of aspiration. The mariner, more practically inclined, has used them as directional guides on the lonely seas. The astronomer has sought to discover the laws that govern their existence in the space-time continuum of the cosmos. The philosopher and mystic have sought to understand man's relation to these vast radiating lamps that brighten the dark corners of space.

When different people view the illuminated cosmos, two responses may be evident—despair and exultation. Pondering the immensity of space and contrasting it with the smallness of man, a person may experience a sense of the imagination-staggering whole of which he is but an infinitesimal part. It is vast and illimitable, while he is small and feeble; it is scaled to aeonic cycles while he is but a transient tenant whose lodgings are leased for but a few decades; it moves in rhythms of grandeur and light, while he is encumbered by a petty burden of human cares and contentions. It manifests the sublimity that his own life but dimly reflects. Therefore is he cast down when he comes face to face with the nightly testimony of other worlds that speak in flashes of coruscating light.

A slightly different meditation will yield—not dejection—but exultation. Man is an inalienable part of cosmic grandeur. He has a place in the vast order of the universe—a place in the solemn process of revolving solar systems. He is a participant in an age-

long drama, an actor—small though he be—on an immense stage in the theater of cosmos. He is a contemporary of the sun and a fellow citizen of space with the planets. His birth and death are symbols of processes that characterize planets, solar systems, and stars. The fire of space is, in essence, similar to the fire that spurts forth when he strikes a match. The light that streams from the evening lamp differs but in degree from the flashing rays that emanate from the sun.

OUR first choice, then, involves the courage to look at the limitless universe in which we live and not to be overwhlemed by its greatness, grandeur, and mystery, not to shrink back in fright before the vast panorama of star-studded space.

Too long have we regarded ourselves as belonging to Earth instead of to space. Too long has our gaze been directed downward rather than upward. Too long have we considered the small-dimensioned Earth separate from the network of eternal light that adorns space. We have imprisoned ourselves within the circumscribing walls of the planet and forgotten the truth that all things are interrelated, that the part responds to the whole and the whole to the part.

Separate, isolated, apart—thus has Earth life been down the centuries and the belief has been sown that we are unrelated to the cyclic rhythms of the enfolding universe, that everything happening in other quarters of space touches us not at all.

Buddhists speak of the "heresy of separateness," and this charge may be properly leveled at modern man, for he has in large measure denied his link with the universal powers that govern galaxies and solar systems. Having so determinedly isolated himself, he complains that he is begirt by alien forces in a supremely indifferent cosmos. The philosophy woven out of such questionable assumptions has created a dense barrier through which light penetrates with difficulty.

Much has been said about the extraordinary progress that has been made in the field of communications, but we are still unrelated to the rest of the universe—a deplorable state of iso-

lation and separation. In a sense, astrology seeks to bring us an awareness that the Earth is part of the cosmic order, but this study has found many detractors. One of the great tasks presented to the human race is that of breaking out of its state of isolation and establishing communications with the far-off worlds. Perhaps the original sin may have resulted in this alienation of Earth from its proper function in the ordered structure of cosmos. It is high time that we outgrew the circumscribing patterns of Earth and more challenging call of space. The confines of the planet are somewhat constrictive and stifling when we contemplate the broader field of interrelated solar systems.

Confronting the starry spectacle of other worlds, we set down as a principle the brief statement: The universe is one. The architecture of the heavens has been established on foundational laws. Light, in all its coruscating beauty, is a common denominator. Existence and movement in space are also everywhere apparent. Birth and death characterize a man, a planet, a solar system, a constellation. All that exists is in the process of change or becoming, that is, evolving. The ultimate goal of evolutionary movement is—on Earth as in the heavens—cloaked in mystery. That enshrouding sense of uncomprehended purposes invites our everlasting searching.

The entire universe is cut out of the same cloth. The laws that govern phenomena on Earth are but manifestations of their cosmic counterparts. It is true, of course, that the conditions of life will vary in different areas of the universe, but it would be a failure of the imagination to deny that intelligence may find expression in forms other than the garment of flesh and bones that we associate with a human being on Earth.

The oneness of the cosmos is a theme with uplifting implications. The same Grand Architect who established the foundations of cosmos created the fraction of the universe that we call the Earth. The electricity of the atom is of the same essence as that which flashes across the horizon when the sword of lightning traverses the sky. Atomic blasts on Earth are miniature expressions of vast eruptions that occur in the sun. The chemical ele-

ments of the scientists are the building blocks that have been used in erecting the structure of the universe.

The cosmos is one seamless garment; or, in other terms, one vast cathedral existing in space and ruled by the measured rhythmic cycles of time. Each part is linked to every other part, and each fraction affects the whole. The Earth, for example, is utterly dependent on the light it receives from the central sun. Newton long since pointed out how one body in space affects another. Expressing the interrelatedness of all things, a poet once wrote, "Thou canst not stir a flower without the troubling of a star." The light given off by a far-distant star a thousand years ago may be reaching us but now. It is a universe of multiform linkages where an action in any given place causes a reaction in other quarters. Scientists inform us that cosmic rays from unknown sources in outer space impinge upon the Earth with telling effect.

All living things on Earth are dependent on the radiations from the sun. The seasons are a function of our distance from the vast furnace that flames in space about ninety-three million miles away. Moonlight depends on the reflective power of our satellite. The universe is a series of relationships, and everything in it affects, and is affected by, everything else. Reciprocity is woven into the structure of the surrounding world. Actions beget reactions, causes produce effects, deeds develop consequences, thoughts yield precipitations.

MAN, the microcosm, is related to the vast macrocosm of which he is an indefeasible part. The nature of that relationship gives rise to issues that are of central importance to the human race. To begin with, man is a product of the universe; it has produced him just as, analogously, a rose bush produces roses. Why it has begotten him provides him with a life quest. There are some persons who maintain that the question is unanswerable, but, needless to say, they are not attracted to philosophy and their arbitrary conclusion does nothing to diminish anyone's ignorance.

The very struggle to find a solution is a creative act that lends dignity to human existence. The mystery of the unknown does not vanish simply because we choose to disregard it. It is no herculean achievement to solve a problem by denying that it exists.

On this plane, man manifests through a form—and persons are not wanting who equate him with that form. Those who hold this view have been called materialists. Without granting their assumption, let us pursue this line of thought further. At a certain stage, matter may become radiant—and radium proves this to be so. Atomic fission indicates that there are huge stores of energy locked in every bit of matter. Astronomers tell us that a few grams of certain stars may conceivably weigh millions of tons. Matter can be manipulated—as radio and television evidence—in such fashion that whatever happens in one quarter of the Earth may be almost instantaneously transmitted to a far-distant place. Even common mud can persuade a seed to become a flower.

If matter has such astonishing properties, and man is composed of matter, is he not something of a miracle even to the veriest materialist? Those who equate man with the form in which he manifests often fail to explain that matter—and not only spirit—is a grand mystery to be explored. Is man less ingeniously contrived than a radio that transmits sound without wires? How, then, is man related, even materially, to the infinite cosmos with which he is co-existent?

Matter can be dense, like ice, and rarefied, like water vapor. Electricity cannot be seen, but its effects are demonstrably evident. Thought is invisible, but it conditions a man's life and surroundings. Electricity and thought, then, although imperceptible to our senses, mold matter into shape and form. They are analagous to the spirit that represents the driving purpose behind the fluctuating patterns of cyclic change. The architecture of the universe points to the power that fashioned and designed it, the energy of purpose that molds matter as the potter shapes his clay or the architect implements his plan. The picture suggests the artist, the book suggests the author, and the cosmos suggests the spirit. That governing power is one throughout the vast de-

signs of limitless space. This mighty Will determined the existence of man and of solar systems. These objectifications are precipitations of a central intelligence, just as the deeds of a human being are the concrete record of his thought.

Man, the microcosm, is a manifestation of the macrocosm. Being descended of the cosmos, he partakes of its nature. In both, the outer expression arises from an inner impulse, that is, form, which is material, flows from spirit, which is so refined that the gross senses do not register it. Thus, the invisible governs the visible, the objective is conditioned by the subjective, the form reflects the essence.

The universe provides man with an existence in space. He is permitted to evolve and unfold by the measured rhythm of time, to gather experience in the concrete realm of form, and to return eventually to the invisible source from which he came. This is what the universe does for man—but what does man do for the universe? The gap between what he receives from life and what he gives back is a measure of his spiritual stature.

THE GIFTS that each member of the human race receives are so varied that the mere enumeration of them would be voluminous. Nature, with all her diverse manifestations of beauty, provides the setting. Running streams cascade from craggy heights, flowers add color to the landscape, trees rise skyward in vertical majesty, birds fill the air with their songs and twitterings, grass carpets the earth, mountains rise in grandeur toward distant clouds, the sun at dawn and sunset paints the horizons with a choice palette. In winter, the snow casts its mantle of white over all things, and in spring the miracle of revivification adorns the trees with green and daubs the flowers with varied hues. Night brings the vista of infinite space punctuated by the lamps of the heavens. These gifts are eternal, readily apprehensible to all. There are innumerable others for which he must search. Diamonds are hidden in the depths of the earth, and so are precious metals. In matter sleeps the mystery of electricity and atomic energy. Within man, well

concealed, are soul and spirit. Thought is given to him as a mighty lever to reshape the world and rise to the stars. Imagination and creativity have been conferred upon him so that he might transform that which is into that which ought to be, and ultimately can comprehend the secret purposes of the shaping Will that sustains the grand architecture of the universe. The gift of choosing what he will become has also been granted to him. Time and space have been provided, and a body, so that he might work out his destiny.

All this the cosmos has bestowed on man. What has man done with these gifts? How wisely has he used them? Indeed, has he manifested gratitude for what he has received, or has he rather found reason to complain that he was born into an imperfect world where pain and sicknesses are to be found and that mysterious figure known as Death daily tolls the final bell for a percentage of mankind? What spiritual progress has he made in the millions of years that he has populated the planet? What has he done with the precious gift of life and the powers that ally him to the grandeur of the surrounding cosmos?

Persons may readily be found who proclaim that the universe is callously indifferent, that man is merely a superior animal, that all efforts at self-protection are futile because Death arbitrarily cuts them short. How have those who hold these beliefs merited the better world that they ask Nature and society to provide for them? Indeed, how has modern man—intent on pleasure, engrossed in material considerations, demanding increased benefits from the cosmos—how has he merited anything else but the chaotic and tumultuous society in which he finds himself?

Various panaceas are offered today. Voices are raised to end wars, eliminate poverty, provide justice to minority groups, end the pollution of the environment. I do not take issue with any of these objectives, but I submit that there is a far more vital need that far transcends them. I refer to the regeneration of the spirit in man. Panaceas involving only material betterment have been tried time and again. As a matter of fact, America is said to be the richest and most powerful country in the world, yet we are troubled, divided, unhappy, crime-ridden, dissatisfied.

Poverty of the spirit is far more serious than material indigence, and contamination of consciousness than external pollution. The upliftment of man is a greater issue than the creation of an environment in which he feels more comfortable.

When we associate resurrection with spring, we have a good idea about the meaning of the term. Trees adorn themselves with leaves, flowers begin to bloom, seeds burst their sides as they develop and grow. In all these manifestations, the germ of life, when properly nourished and activated, shapes matter into new and creative forms. The process begins from within and produces extensive outer changes. The spirit of man may be likened to the invisible essence we call life-in-the-seed. It is a spark that has the potentiality of becoming a flame, the essence that may evolve into an unforeseeable maturity. It is the inner quickening that produces the outer manifestations. As a single match can start an extensive fire, so the kindling of the spirit may produce far-reaching changes affecting man's destiny.

(Part Two of this article will appear in the October issue)

DON PEPINO

Angelo De Luca

He was a patient study for a Master's brush,
This chunky little man relaxed among his friends
Rolling his wine reflectively from cheek to cheek,
His walrus mustache wriggling with a nascent thought:
Into a tiny hand he slid a shiny coin;
He vanished, then as suddenly he reappeared
With pastries for the ladies, *vino* for the men;
A timely pat upon the head; a soothing word
He interposed within the flaming pitch of rage.
Compassion's courier — he did her urgent work.

THE UNSEEN TREASURE

Eleanor Ebersole

Once there was a treasure that a child valued very much. A man was in charge of the treasure. He was busy and didn't want to be bothered about it.

The man set up a series of substitutes which often satisfied children, and adults, so that they gave up on the treasure.

The child began to try the substitutes one by one. The first was a little wagon. For the child it lasted only a day. Then there was a playhouse, a very beautiful one. This lasted two or three days of the child's time. The fountain in the garden was next. The child was enthralled, but not captured by its beauty. A further substitute was a kitten. Of course kittens are a treasure to any child, and many happy days ensued, but the real treasure remained in the child's heart.

After a time, the keeper of the treasure began to realize that he had a serious challenge with which to contend. He thought of many exciting diversions, such as a golden locket, a sailboat, a school with other children, a friend. Each had its portion of the child's affection, but the treasure remained.

The man finally gave his entire attention to the matter. He took the child out, himself, on his business trips and other excursions he was planning to take.

The child went unsatisfied.

One day the child, now familiar with the man who kept the treasure, waited until he was gone and went to look for the treasure alone. It was nowhere to be seen. The child looked in the bureau drawers, in the closet, in the yard, behind the hedge. No wonder the man had been able to guard the treasure so well. It was nowhere to be seen.

The child began to cry.

When the man returned, the child made a remarkable discovery. The treasure was with the man himself. It was his unseen heart.

BIRTHDAY SONG *Judy Shepps*

Boy-Man you are becoming. It might not
seem so in the storm of the now
Days but you are and the growth rocks
yardsticks to new calculations.
The depths of the grow-pains deceive
they burn wilderness and conceive
Paths for fledgling travellers to glide.
Patience is the stranger by your side
wearing a disguising cloak.
Strength is that spectre you cannot
identify by name.
Choice (and the capacity to choose) is
the pale game figure ahead.
Today is what must be captured and
tamed for you are becoming.

Historical mirrors deny you the possibility
of watching this scene but my vision
Is unclouded. Today is the becoming day.
Happy birth-day.

WHEELS *William Walter De Bolt*

Wheels took Grandfather
and all his generation
to church. Like demons,
they take us in a hurry
to the other side of doom.

ATTAINMENT *Leonard Opalov*

O, Summer,
you are marvelous
as a cathedral choir.
You convey exalted loftiness,
and the spacious sky on high
in its sublime majesty
seems higher and higher.

MEDITATION BASED ON PSALM 53

Samuel M. Silver

In connection with arguments between theism and atheism, the story is told that two goldfish were arguing over whether or not there was such a thing as man. One goldfish, an atheist, used many arguments to persuade the other that there couldn't be any such thing as man. The other was convinced because the concept of man was really too outlandish to believe. But, after being convinced, he said to the atheist: "But if there is no such being as man, who changes our water every day?"

The argument in the fishbowl has its echoes in Psalm 53. The poem begins with these words: "The fool says in his heart. . . There is no God." The Psalmist takes it for granted that anyone who believes this world is without a maker is a fool. The astronauts in the Apollo flight were apparently saying the same thing when in words addressed from the area of

the moon to earth-dwellers on a holy day they chose not to speak their own words but to read the opening words of Scripture: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth."

The astronauts were saying what men of faith have been arguing for centuries, that this world reveals an orderliness, an exactitude which must indicate that it was fashioned and did not come to be by chance. The systems in the universe and its symmetries seem to reflect a brain which put the world together. Indeed, if the world was accidentally made, how could you send a space ship on high and be sure that it would be guided by certain fixed rules of motion and space?

So it is worth rereading Psalm 53, which tells us that those who deny there is a God are also subject to corruption and abominable behavior. Those who do not believe that this world is a guided missile, the Psalm says, often feel fear where there is no need for fear. What awaits the ungodly? Shame and disaster, says the Psalmist. I pray that we will not only accept the belief that there is a God in the world but that by our conduct we will add to the godliness in the world.

THE ART OF SINGING A COMPLETE SONG

Thomas O. Perkins

Songs are sung
in the heart
Chords are made
in the mind
Harmony is beautiful
in the life.

CHARISMATA *Pollyanna Sedziol*

It isn't enough
just to pray for gifts—
men being what we are
we must pray
even more earnestly, honestly
for the ability
to recognize what is given,
unmarred by preconceptions
and self-imposed dimensions,
for what he intends it to be
for you
for me
allowing Him
to tailor each individually.

A SEED IS PLANTED

Catherine Cabeen Houck

Every Sunday morning when the clock on our mantel was ready to strike the half hour after nine the bells from the three churches in our little northern Louisiana town began to ring out "Get ready, get ready." This was a reminder that Sunday School would begin in thirty minutes. Whatever their parents' choice of denomination, all children went through the same last minute preparations: braids must be smoothed, curls rebrushed, hair bows given a final flour-

ish. Depending upon the season, other admonitions were given—wear your overshoes, don't run and get overheated, and always, don't lose your offering. In most homes and certainly in ours one other was added, that last briefing of the Golden Text.

With plenty of time to spare, my sister and I walked the short distance to the Methodist Episcopal Church South. This was a long title but one accepted with a child's confidence that if adults used the name it must be right. In fact it was to be many years later that we would hear of any other branch of Methodism. To our young minds this was not only *the* Methodist Church but the nucleus of all creeds.

The building was small, made of clapboard and painted white. A squat tower, housing the bell, arose between two front doors. Inside there were two aisles with the outside rows of pews touching the wall. Being Methodist, the altar rail was a prominent feature with the pulpit centered between two smaller stands on which vases of home-grown flowers usually were placed. The windows held no stained-glass illustrations, only ordinary glass, but the surrounding landscape was pleasing and restful.

The accoutrement that was of the greatest interest to us was the reed organ. If we arrived early enough, could read music at all, and promised to pull out only the andante and the dulciana stops, we were allowed to play one hymn each before time to begin the opening session. My earliest "piece" was *Bringing In The Sheaves*. I am not sure that it was a favorite, it must have been its simplicity. I was too young to read words or notes, but my mother had taught me to play the melody with my right hand by pasting numbered slips of paper over the keys. I would play the one refrain over and over, chanting, "One, two, three."

Children went to Sunday school in my early days for much the same reason that they do today. Our parents began by taking us, until it became the accustomed thing and then we continued to attend regularly for the same reasons that you and I attend church services today. We wanted to go. There was something here that made this day different from the preceding ones, more

than stories or music. Here was some feeling connected with best dresses, polished shoes, a real hat, a lace-edged handkerchief conspicuously left hanging out of a pocket or purse, all intermingled with a special sense of belonging. Call it a parable, if you wish call it a sermon, but we found something in this hour that made a young child meet life so happily that even now I have forgotten all the troubles and remember all the blessings.

Strangely, I remember none of my teachers, but they must have made some impression as throughout my life I have remained true to their creed. The organist and choir members were the young men and women seen frequently and well known. From my earliest memory the superintendent was my great uncle; following his death, the position was filled by the father of my best friend. We had little equipment and less activity. A modern child would miss the colored pictures, blackboards, little tables and chairs, but to me the story was the important thing. Each Sunday we were given a card, probably three-and-a-half inches by two-and-a-half. A colored Biblical picture was on one side with a verse printed beneath it. This was the Golden Text, and every child was supposed to know it by the following Sunday. On the reverse side were questions. This was the parents' share of responsibility. They were to accomplish this by reading the Bible story and guiding the child's interest to the correct answers. I wonder now if all mothers carried out their part as diligently as ours. Surely not, for there were always some children who never knew the answers.

The hour passed quickly. Parents and other church members were already coming in for the church service. It seemed fitting to join our respective families and sit through the hour that followed. There must have been a short break or dismissal, but in my memory it seems all one service. The sermon was considered not too difficult for a child. In fact, I recall pleasure in participating. There were prayer books, thick and squarish, very small black-covered books, no music only the printed stanzas. There were also cards with the Apostles' Creed in print that children could read. We knelt for all prayers, facing away from the pulpit. This

custom was observed, as I have been told, because ours was a European form of worship. I believe they simply meant Wesleyan, as at least ninety five per cent of our members were of British descent. There were two exceptions. We had in regular attendance the only Irish Catholic family in our town. A brother and two sisters, all elderly and unmarried. They worshipped with us, participated in all work done by the women of "the Ladies Aid." Transportation was impossible for them to attend their own church regularly; only on special occasions would they take the train the previous day, spend the night in Shreveport, attend their mass, and return home on the late Sunday afternoon train. The second exception was our lone Indian woman. She lived with descendants of a pioneer family and was loved by all the children who knew her.

As mentioned earlier, our town boasted three churches. One was ours. One was Presbyterian; membership here was chiefly Ulster Scot. The third was Baptist. There was only a large residence and grounds between it and our building. Sunday after Sunday during the hot summer weather when windows had to be open for air, it was a challenge for the two preachers to close on the same minute. Otherwise it was with joy that one congregation heard the choir of the rival church begin the closing hymn, for then the sermon had to be quickly ended. The pastor knew he had lost the attention of his flock whose thoughts were now on getting home to Sunday dinner.

COMPASSION

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast,
He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.

Self-confidence is the greatest of victories. —Plato

THE OPAL'S FIRE

Zelma S. Dennis

Legend gives rise to many interesting thoughts concerning the special properties of precious stones. It has been said about the opal that the longer and more often one wears the stone the more fire and luster seem to emanate from it. Whether this is true or not we do not know. However, we do know that the jewel of the human soul takes on a beautiful radiance when it is chastened by the sorrow and suffering fires which often seem to encompass it and hold it in the crucible of life.

I have a very dear friend whose life bears witness to this idea. She has borne trials in recent years which would have caused ordinary persons to give up in despair. Not this lady. She not only possesses a Christ-like compassion for the suffering and hardship of her fellow man, but there seems to be no limit to her outpourings of energy and loving care in service to those in need.

The countless burdens she has carried appear to have enriched her being until an aura of light continually surrounds her. Walking in the way of the Master Jesus, she unselfishly gives in a continuous outflow. Her philosophy of sharing and tender mercy is extended not only to the need and comfort of her friends but in gestures of kindness to all.

These qualities, like the legendary fire of life shining from the opal, also shine from the eyes of my friend. They give a melodic lift to her voice, and the Christ-light gleams from her soul and her life.

NATURE STUDY *Pollyanna Sedziol*

If I could,
I would interpret for you
the wild variety
of notes and nuances with which
a myriad of birds
are seeding the air
and I would pin to paper
all the secret messages
soft breezes and a distant stream
are whispering in my ear. . .

But even though I cannot frame,
semantically, these pages,
I can share their epilogue:
an easing of confusion
and regression of the pain
which tightened my heart
causing life's joy to depart. . .
mental rest, and loosening
of over-wound responses—
a happiness happening.

No one of you is a believer until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself. —Islam

Strange is our situation here upon earth. Each of us comes for a short visit, not knowing why, yet sometimes seeming to divine a purpose. From the standpoint of daily life, however, there is one thing we do know: That man is here for the sake of other men. . . . for the countless unknown souls with whose fate we are connected by a bond of sympathy. Many times a day I realize how much my own outer and inner life is built upon the labors of my fellow men, both living and dead, and how earnestly I must exert myself in order to give in return as much as I have received and am still receiving.

Albert Einstein

CREATIVE SYMPATHY

Mildred Long

We all need sympathy, for it is one of the expressions of affection and caring. It is the soft touch of the hand, the gentle voice saying, "Yes, I know. I've been there, too." It is the bond that brings two souls together in sharing the deep things of life: love, disappointment, heartache, sorrow, regret, or rapturous joy. Life would be barren indeed without the expression of sympathy one with the other.

But while your sympathy with me may cause you to recall a similar experience, it need not and should not draw you into the stream of my darkness—of whatever nature that darkness may be. First, because your own hurt or grief should long ago have healed so that the recalling of it does not give you pain. And second, because your part in my healing is to help pull me out the darkness, not sink into it with me.

Recently, after a long illness, I had one of those "down" days. I was restless, nervous, nothing I tried to do gave me peace or satisfaction. A friend called me on the phone and we talked awhile. Later she came bringing me a book she thought I would enjoy, and instead of talking about *me* she read to me from the book. But she did say, "Now don't blame yourself for these times. There are mysteries we do not understand. You'll be all right."

Of course I felt better. Somebody cared. Somebody understood and loved me and had no criticism of me because I was not at my best that day. This is creative sympathy.

This friend was helping me not to give in to the feeling of darkness, for this conflict between light and darkness, sorrow and joy, defeat and victory, has been the portion of all those who climb toward the Light. The dawning of the Christ-consciousness has always been a way of suffering or struggle. We must all learn to take no account of the suffering but to let the Light shine regardless of our feelings and lift us out of the trouble into hope, and quietness, and peace. And to give us a certain quiet acceptance even when results are slow in coming.

We are reminded to "stand in stillness with a lifted heart." And whoever aids us to turn our thoughts away from discomfort to the Light that shines eternally, both within and without, is our true friend, comforter, consoler. This friend of mine knows true sympathy. And I am reminded of a favorite quotation of mine from Saint Teresa:

"Let nothing disturb thee;
Nothing affright thee.
All things are passing;
God never changeth.
Patient endurance attaineth to all things;
Who God possesseth in nothing is wanting.
Alone God sufficeth."

The next morning I awoke to the bright sunlight of a new and glorious day in the outside world. Also in my heart.

The great use of life is to spend it for something which outlasts it. —William James

THE SECRET OF RADIANT LIVING

Mark Halpern

There are many high and noble arts in this world but there is none superior to the art of living. It is a difficult art, in which we are all students slowly but steadily gaining wisdom by learning our lessons. And in the feverishly speeded-up pace of these most crucial decades, some knowledge and application of the art of living are urgently needed if we are to maintain a measure of sanity and guiding awareness necessary for us to keep advancing on the upward path of enlightenment and to cope with all the pressing problems confronting mankind.

In the school of life we soon discover that in the large number and diversity of character traits among our fellow students there is a prolific source of discord and irritation. Their ways, their opinions, their temperaments often clash with our own. And though we may sincerely try to be conventionally polite and outwardly uncritical, deep within us we seethe with resentment. It irks us that people are not what we would have them be—that they do not and obviously will not conform to the pattern we have set for them. We find it hard to understand why others, especially our close friends—and even the members of our own family—refuse to accept our judgment as to what is best for them or to order their lives in conformity with our per-

sonal ethics and philosophy.

And so we find ourselves continually irritated with people. Instead of having the serenity of mind and soul which is vitally necessary if we are successfully to meet the challenge of these times, many of us are inwardly lashed by stormy waves of the dark sea of criticism and condemnation. As a result, we become deaf to the warning bell of the spirit of mankind chiming in the high tower of human destiny. Each echoing intonation admonishes us that we shall never attain to a lasting peace in a golden era of good will until we first learn the secret of transmuting our petty little differences of the outer personality and recognize our true spiritual unity and essential oneness....

In the old medieval days of minstrelsy, there lived a bard called Pavello. With his harp ever at his side, he wandered over the land, stopping at the palaces of kings and at the castles of nobles to sing his inspired lyrics to the nightly revelers.

Now, Pavello was no ordinary minstrel, but a highly sensitive lofty-minded poet. His compassionate heart was fired with the purpose of rousing the members of royalty and nobility to an awareness of their responsibility to their serfs and subjects. He cared naught for the wine and rich food they gave him as a reward for entertaining them; nor did he care for the coins they flung at him—save that they were a means toward helping the needy he met in his travels. He had consecrated his poetry to the service of man.

Amid scenes of debauchery, Pavello would continue to play on his harp, pouring out all the profoundest beauty of his soul in sublimest poetry, his eyes full of pain and sorrow. Subtly, by implication, he would insert words of gentle admonition, calling attention to their faults of selfish indulgence, to their flagrant apostasy from the high ethics of true religion.

But his most inspired verse appeared only to inflame their lusts and passions and make them even more forgetful of the dignity and obligations of their rank. Fervently en-

treating, the while he plucked at the vibrant strings of his harp with silvery-moonbeam lightness, he would intone such passages of throbbing verse as would seem that no mere mortals could resist. So the great Orpheus himself must have played on his lyre when he led his wife Eurydice back to life on earth from the lower world after charming Pluto with his divine music.

Still it was all of no avail. The more of himself Pavello gave to his verse and music, the more, it seemed, they abandoned themselves to their riotous debauchery. The canker of bitter frustration and resentment burned deep in Pavello's heart.

Thus it had been with the poet for many years, until it seemed to him that he could go on no longer. He felt utterly spent in body and soul; and he kept telling himself that he had exhausted all his resources of inspiration, and that as a result life had lost all interest and meaning for him.

It was then, one evening, he bethought himself to pray to God for strength and guidance to go on living.

And that very night, after a long period of fervent soul-searching prayer, as he lay in his bed unable to sleep, it seemed to him that he saw his muse Erato descending in the pale moonlight slanting through the casement. Her yellow tresses fell from the cool ivory glow of her forehead like a shimmering veil of finely spun gold. And her violet eyes seemed so warm with their infinite understanding that they melted his heart and soothed it with the wondrous solace of a heavenly balm.

"Pavello" came the breath of her gentle voice like the sigh of a summer evening's breeze, "why grievest thou so?"

The poet gazed up at her through the liquid mist of his eyes. "Ah, Erato—is it indeed thine own self? Thou hast not forgotten Pavello, then? Forgive me, Erato, for I have failed —my life has been in vain. I have been deceived in thinking myself a poet. There is no life in my verse—the words of my lyrics are without the power to touch, let alone move the soul

of man."

Erato smiled, and her smile was like the serene dawn of eternity in the poet's heart. Then came the inspiring music of her words:

"Was the divine gift of poetry given unto thee, o Pavello, to poison thy soul with vexation and resentment against thy fellow men? Was not the great gift bestowed upon thee, rather, to glorify it by glorifying man and his Creator?"

And with those words Erato vanished.

A thick veil seemed to drop from before Pavello's eyes. And at the same moment a ponderous weight fell from his heart.

Henceforth, in his new desire to find the good in others with which he could glorify man, the poet forgot to look for faults. He accepted the nobles as they were. Observing here and there little acts of self-forgetful friendship and kindness among them, he sang of those qualities.

And, as the days passed, he noticed that the revelers gradually lost interest in their continual unrestrained rioting. They began to extol the high virtues of which Pavello now sang. One powerful duke announced that on the morrow he would inaugurate reforms to improve the conditions of his serfs. Others declared they would follow his example in their own domains.

Pavello came to be more in demand. And wherever he went, he brought with him the transforming spirit of good will and harmonious human relations, and left the place better for his having been there.

For the poet had learned the great secret in the art of radiant living: to keep himself continually open to divine guidance by means of spiritual communion through prayer; and to keep always looking for the good in others and overlooking the flaws of human frailty instead of magnifying them by repeatedly bringing them to the attention of their possessors.

Each of us has come into life with a definitely unique individuality. Within the soul of every person is an unconquerable urge to unfold and express a pattern of living that will ultimately bring about the fulfillment of one's destiny. That pattern has been irrevocably and indelibly imprinted in the soul of man by a wisdom infinitely greater than our own—a wisdom that grants the individual free will to learn his lessons in the school of life until he comes into the conscious realization of that pattern as part of his true divine identity. Therefore it would seem to be presumptuous for any of us to impose our own personally conceived idea of what particular pattern of life another person should live by in order to learn the lessons necessary for his spiritual growth at the time.

It is told of Alexander the Great that one day when he was riding on his horse at the head of his army he spied the philosopher Diogenes sitting off to one side in the sunshine. A great admirer of philosophers, his own tutor having been the famous Aristotle, the young ruler halted his men by holding up his hand, dismounted, and advanced to the side of Diogenes.

The mighty conqueror addressed himself to the philosopher: "Ask of me anything your heart desires, Diogenes, and I will grant it unto you."

Diogenes gazed slowly up at Alexander and said: "I ask that you be kind enough to step aside from before me—so that the sun may continue to shine upon me. Do not take away, o Alexander of Macedonia, that which is not within your power to give."

And so Alexander failed in his attempt to improve the lot of Diogenes, who had no property or possessions, but was content to wander about with a lamp looking for an honest man. The monarch was unable to impose a pattern of life on Diogenes which was not meant for the philosopher.

A similar story is told in the Orient of a benevolently ruling Caliph and his meeting with a renowned saint of the times.

Taking pity on the apparently severe asceticism of the saint's life, the Caliph said to the venerable white-bearded old man: "Thou art growing too old for such austerities. Give up thy gloomy life of renunciation, and come live with me in my palace to share with me all the joys and pleasures of my life. Thou shalt lack for naught."

But the saint replied: "O Caliph, thou art indeed gracious to one so humble and unimportant as myself. Thou wilt pardon me, I know, and deem me not ungrateful, if I say that I prefer to go on with my own way of life. For thy life of luxury shall pass away with thy last breath. But my life is of the Eternal, which is life everlasting...."

TO LIVE AGAIN

Howard G. Hanson

Not because of Jeopardy I grow today,
but for those who jeopardised I pray.
They walked an alien road as I,
who did not seek to rise and pry
up the broken bridge that pinned them down;
they turned hampering shadows on the town.

I sought the peak of truth upon a hill,
with reason probed the merciful will,
until the pain of growing eased,
my nature steadied with body poised.
Reflected in life's mirror I saw dawn,
and came to realize what fearful pawn
had challenged me to live again;
meet Christ in heart and love all men!

ORIENTALE

Ruth Andrews Crorkin

Like a rare Nipponese print traced in ebon and silver,
My Ocean dreams for a space, in a spell of pallid moonlight.
Molten, luminous, brooding, and pregnant with untold secrets,
Subtle and strangely still, ageless, eternal, occult,
Like unto Death, her Brother!

Night-winds salt and chill whisper in from the hush of mid-ocean,
Of vastness dark and never-to-be-plumbed,
Of forces elusive, never-to-be-bound,
Of power, limitless, cosmic, universal. . . .
My Spirit also, free from beginning of Time,
Never to be possessed, never made servile,
Merges, is One with this infinite Peace, one with all Being!

Sparkle of foam rims these timeless sands,
Fragile, evanescent, born of star-mist and darkness,
Oh, so quick, so quick to vanish and leave no trace!
So even with Man. . . .
One hour athrob with desire,
Soon, soon forgotten ash from Time's burning,
A dream that is past. . . .
Only the Soul may endure, and will never know ending!

One loving spirit sets another on fire. —St. Augustine

CORNERS *William Walter De Bolt*

Corners have more peculiarities than
Domitian
and interrupt your intentions and plans
(as full as the multiplication table).
Nobody understands corners.
They turn you around
from certainty to the awkwardness of
guesses.
They resemble nothing similar to logic,
and are inhabited by germs of claustro-
phobia.
They are assemblers of mysteries
and connoissuers of the unusual.

If time ever makes a decision
to dangle like a ripe apple,
I will open the old door
to the far kingdom of childhood
and sit again in corners
and ask questions.

WHY A MOON WALK *William Walter De Bolt*

A walk on the moon
seemed wiser than strolls on earth
among the muggers.

The happiness of your life depends upon the quality of your thoughts. —Marcus Aurelius

IN THE EXPECTED GLORY

Emma S. McLaughlin

They were coming! Even though I was still asleep, I knew they were coming, wild geese, beating their way out of darkness, flying north.

It seemed that all of my lifetime I had lived with the expectation of this thrilling moment, but it had always been denied me. Oh I had experienced the miracle vicariously, many times, through the eyes of a dear friend. She lived high above the river and seemed on intimate terms with waterfowl. I believe, in some magical way, she sensed their comings and goings. Surely, I thought, she is a favorite of the gods and truly blessed.

Several times, forewarned by their call, she telephoned to me. "The geese are flying south," she would hurriedly say, "they have just passed over our house. If you hurry, you will be able to see them."

Crying a hasty thanks, I would sweep through the house like a whirlwind, catching up binoculars on the way, eager to be outdoors. There I would stand, in the golden light of an autumn afternoon, part of the wildness, calling out my silent farewells. But it was always in the vivid, hurting colors of an autumn afternoon—never in the mystery of morning, the glory of a sunrise.

Now, at last, this deep, elemental need of mine was being realized. I was outdoors, having responded to the sound of trumpets. I stood in early darkness, scanning the edge of night. My gown whipped about my cold, bare feet and the mist of morning clung fast to the damp, curling tendrils of my hair.

Then I saw them! They surged forward, cutting a wedge out of darkness, carrying the light of sunrise on their wings.

I was not aware of breath, of life, only of the magic of a moment, only of that shining arrow piercing the clouds.

In a burst of glory, the first rays of morning light appeared, gently fingering the tops of trees, highlighting the vanishing birds, settling softly on me. I could hear the tombs of winter swinging open. I was transcendent—a part of the miracle—suddenly resurrected into sping.

BEFORE PEACE CLAIMS ITS OWN

Velta Myrle Allen

I strove to gain
The peace of mortal mind
Which seems so lost, so very hard to find.
I would explain
My eager quest to learn
The answers that would ease my deep concern
That peace might reign.

I found that all
Are just about the same
In conjuring excuses for their blame.
In principle
I learned that I alone
Must conquer self before peace claims its own
Or I shall fail.

No matter when
Or where or why Truth speaks,
It always finds the soul that truly seeks!

NOTICES AND COMMENTS

NEW ADVISOR FROM ALASKA. Mrs. Phyllis Malone, of Anchorage, Alaska, has generously accepted the Fellowship's invitation to serve as an Advisor for the Western Zone—the first from her state. About herself she writes: "My husband is a retired Air Force pilot now working as a government investigator for aircraft accidents. We have been all over the States and the Orient and find the nippy winters, summer greenery, hunting and fishing in Alaska joyful experiences. I began writing four years ago, mostly Christian writing. I've published in *Guideposts, Christian Life* Magazine, *Voice, Daily Blessing, Lady's Circle, The Woman,* Sunday school fiction for children, local newspapers. I've also had my share of rejection slips....We attend a fundamental church and find wonderful Christian fellowship. My volunteer work at the State Hospital is overflowing with spiritual experience."

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OF SUN AND LIGHT *Albert Jacobsen*

Innumerable the scenes where rays of sun
Throw light upon varied activities;
Here, gauzy streamers as if silken spun,
Illume wild life through forest tapestries;
There, where stained glass adorns a hallowed church.
They glorify an altar's sacred rites;
A sickroom's windows in the slums they search,
Exposing pain and poverty that blights.
Fierce are the rays that light a battlefield
And consecrate the cruel, macabre scene,
Though they seem gentle where the sick are healed,
And everything is peaceful and serene.
Celestial light will enter heart and soul
Of those for whom God calls the final roll.

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